

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD FOR AMBASSADOR WRIGGINS

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, CE

SUBJ: RECENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. WHILE MUCH TOO EARLY TO MAKE A DEFINITIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE NEW J.R. JAYEWARDENE GOVERNMENT, CERTAIN ACTIONS AND PRO- NOUNCEMENTS OVER THE PAST FEW DAYS INDICATE THAT IT IS AT LEAST TRYING TO PROJECT AN IMAGE OF A NATIONAL "DO THINGS, NO NON- SENSE" GOVERNMENT.

2. REACTING QUICKLY TO PREVENT THE DEMISE OF THE FINANCIALLY STRAPPED SLFP-CONTROLLED TIMES GROUP, THE GOVERNMENT ON AUGUST 2 UNDER THE BUSINESS ACQUISITION ACT ACQUIRED THE "TIMES OF CEYLON, LTD." THE TIMES, WHICH HAS BEEN STEADILY OPERATING AT A LOSS, WAS ABOUT TO BE PUT ON THE AUCTION BLOCK FOR BEING IN ARREARS FOR 232,000 RUPEES OF TAXES. ADDITIONALLY, THE TIMES WAS SEVERAL MILLION RUPEES IN DEBT TO ITS EMPLOYEES, BANKS, AND OTHER CREDITORS. IN A COMMUNIQUE ON THE ACQUISITION ISSUED BY THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, THE GOVERNMENT'S RATION-
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ALE WAS STATED AS WANTING TO ENSURE THE CONTINUED PUBLICATION OF THE TIMES NEWSPAPERS AND TO SAFEGUARD THE INTERESTS OF ITS EMPLOYEES, WHO WERE IN IMMINENT DANGER OF LOSING THEIR EMPLOY- MENT AND FINANCIAL BENEFITS. THE STATED INTENTION IS TO RE- HABILITATE THE TIMES GROUP UNDER AN APPOINTED COMPETENT AUTHO- RITY AND THEN RETURN IT TO A PUBLICLY OWNED COMPANY. (COMMENT: THE PM IS EXTREMELY SENSITIVE TO THE LACK OF AN OPPOSITION,

AND BY SAVING THE TIMES PAPER HE MAY BE PERSERVING SOME SEM-BLANCE OF AN OPPOSITION PRESS. THERE IS A RUMOR, HOWEVER, THAT THE PM WAS MAKING A PRE-EMPTIVE MOVE TO BLOCK A TAKEOVER OF THE TIMES BY ONE OF TWO COMPETING UNP FACTIONS, EITHER GAMINI DISSANAYAKE'S OR R. PREMADASA'S.) IN A RELATED DEVELOPMENT, THE CEYLON TRANSPORT BOARD (CTB) HAS BEEN ORDERED TO TRANSPORT ALL POLITICAL PARTY NEWSPAPERS, IN CONTRAST TO THE FORMER GOVERNMENT'S BAN ON CTB'S TRANSPORTING THE OPPOSITION NEWSPAPERS OF THE LSSP AND CP.

3. IN RESPONSE TO CRITICISM BY MRS. BANDARANAIKE AND THE DEFEATED POLITICAL PARTIES OF THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF ELECTION VIOLENCE, THE PRIME MINISTER ON AUGUST 2 NAMED A THREE-MAN COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT A PROBE OF ALL VIOLENT INCIDENTS DURING AND AFTER THE ELECTION. COMMITTEE MEMBERS ARE D.B.I.P.S. SIRIWARDHANA, SECRETARY OF THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS; R.S. PERERA, FORMER SLFP MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING; AND BERNARD SOYSA, DEFEATED LSSP CANDIDATE AND ACTING GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE LSSP. IRONICALLY, SIRIWARDHANA WAS APPOINTED BY THE UNITED FRONT GOVERNMENT AS A ONE-MAN COMMISSION TO INVESTIGATE 1970 ELECTION VIOLENCE ON J.R. JAYEWARDENE'S COMPLAINT. HIS 1970 REPORT WAS NEVER PUBLISHED, OR FURNISHED TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, BUT THE PM, SAYING THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT REPEAT THE WRONGS OF THE PREVIOUS REGIME, HAS PROMISED PUBLICATION OF ALL UNPUBLISHED REPORTS, INCLUDING THE ONE ON 1970 ELECTION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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VIOLENCE.

4. THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT THE TULF IS MODERATING ITS DEMANDS FOR A SEPARATE STATE AND IS WILLING TO COMPROMISE FOR SOMETHING LESS. AN UNCONFIRMED PRESS REPORT ATTRIBUTED TO UNP SOURCES SAY S THAT JAYEWARDENE HAS OFFERED A "COMPREHENSIVE PACKAGE DEAL" TO THE TULF WHICH WOULD SOLVE THE LANGUAGE PROBLEM AND A NUMBER OF ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS IN THE TAMIL AREAS OF THE NORTH AND EAST. DESPITE ITS PRE-ELECTION HARD-LINE STANCE, THE AVOWEDLY SEPARATIST TAMIL UNITED LIBERATION FRONT HAS DECIDED TO MODERATE ITS RHETORIC AND ITS SHORT-RANGE PLANS, WHILE WAITING TO SEE JUST WHAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT WILL OFFER THEM. AT A POST-ELECTION TULF ACTION COMMITTEE MEETING, PARTY LEADERS DECIDED NOT TO CARRY THROUGH IMMEDIATELY ON THEIR ANNOUNCED PLANS TO TAKE SEPARATE OATHS AS MEMBERS OF A TAMIL ASSEMBLY. TUFL GENERAL SECRETARY AND HARDLINER A. AMIRTHALINGAM WILL TAKE OFFICE AS OFFICIAL LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION WHEN THE ASSEMBLY MEETS AUGUST 4. THE PARTY HOPES TO HEAR SOME CONCILIATORY WORDS IN THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY STATEMENT AT THAT TIME. THEY APPARENTLY HAVE SOME EXPECTATIONS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL EVENTUALLY OFFER COMPROMISES ON SUCH TAMIL DEMANDS AS: 1) TAMIL AS THE OFFICIAL

LANGUAGE OF ADMINISTRATION IN THE NORTHERN AND EASTERN PROVINCES; 2) THE END TO THE SYSTEM OF EDUCATIONAL "STANDARDIZATION," I.E. RACIAL QUOTAS FOR UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE; 3) AN END TO SINHALA "COLONIZATION" OF TAMIL AREAS; AND 4) PARTIAL DEVOLUTION OF POWER FOR THE NORTH AND EAST. THE PARTY'S YOUTHFUL AND MORE RADICAL WING HAS NOT YET BEEN HEARD FROM PERHAPS BECAUSE THE NEW MODERATE LINE HAS NOT BEEN WIDELY PUBLICIZED AS YET; IF THE TULF LEADERS CAN CARRY WITH THEM THE HERETOFORE IMPLACABLE YOUTH, IT WILL BE AN IMPRESSIVE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH THAT J.R. JAYEWARDENE CAN BE TRUSTED BY A TAMIL COMMUNITY THAT HAS BEEN INCREASINGLY ALIENATED OVER THE PAST TWENTY YEARS.
PERKINS

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